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ECHOES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

Ninth annual meeting in Jacob Sleeper Hall, Boston Univ., Sat., Mar. 20, — about 150 present. The Sec. reported the most successful year of the Assoc. His delayed treasurer's report* for 1907-8 showed balance from 1906-7, \$67.22, receipts \$315.42, total \$382.64; expenses \$382.64, including stenographer's bill of \$23.25 for reporting the March 1908 meeting. Treasurer's report 1908-9, receipts \$335.10, expenses \$239.85, bal. \$95.25, several out-standing accounts not rendered. The constitution was amended, so that the regular meetings henceforth will be on the *second* Sat. of *Dec.* and of *Mar.* Officers for 1909-10: PRES., Prof. J. A. Tufts, *Phillips Exeter Academy*; VICE-PRES., Prof. W. A. Neilson, *Harvard*; SEC., G. H. Browne, *B. & N. School, Camb.*; TREAS., S. Thurber, Jr., *Newton High School*; new member of Ex. COM., Miss Kate Stanley, *Technical High, Springfield*. On motion of Mr. Ward of Milton, it was voted that the Pres. appoint a committee to confer with the Classical, Mod. Lang., Math., Sci., and Hist. Associations on the possibility of practical co-operation in securing from each pupil the uniform use of good English in all subjects.

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON AIDS: The obvious field for today's discussion would be the study of lit. Your Com. has felt, however that "the world is so full of a number of things" that it can afford to touch on no less than three aids in the teaching of Eng.: 1. the possibility and usefulness of a school paper as part of the Eng. work; 2. the use of specimens, as an aid to both comp. and lit.; 3. oral composition — whether debating clubs, dramatics, or what not,—clear, coherent speech. (Subjects reluctantly omitted†: 1. The Proper use of Notes; 2. The Study of Poetry; 3. Mythology; 4. The Use of Translations of the Classics; 5. The Literary Study of the Bible.) Emphasis in the teaching of Eng. should be increasingly less academic, more vitally con. w. the daily life of the student. . . . Real test is whether an aid truly aids.

I. *A Class-room Weekly Paper* means a modest effort at practical journalism as a substitute for work in composition. Some sort of publication, typewritten or print, essential. *Purpose*: to give student chance not only to see his work staring him and his readers in face, but to write against time and space for a practical, immediate result. *Advantages*: (1) Teaches student to write on immediate, every-day topics — not what he thinks he ought to say, but what he

* "I have examined these accounts and find them accurate as stated — C. L. HANSON, *Auditor*." † The Secretary solicits leaflets on these topics.

knows he has to say. (2) Seeing his MS. in print, or hope of getting MS. accepted, gives sense of dignity and importance that draws out best work. (3) Mechanics of writing learned by this aid as by no other. *Disadvantages*: (1) "Journalistic style"; but such a paper can not be run for more than a few weeks at a time; and the teacher, ex-officio editor-in-chief, may set whatever austere standard of style he chooses. (2) Conflicting w. school work or periodicals; but may easily be controlled if teacher will work in collusion with others. Its being excellent exercise in composition justifies a slight reduction in quantity of theme work throughout rest of year. Mr. Hinchman then explained the organization, weekly routine, and expense of such a paper, and distributed copies of *The Groton Weekly*. "No form of composition that I have tried," he concluded, "comes so close to actual life or insists so imperatively not only on accurate or swift work, but on work that is both a. and s. Surely no need of Am. citizens to-day is more apparent than ability to work fast and yet thoroughly. And no aid in Eng.-teaching can be of greater benefit than one which prohibits academic artificiality."

2. *The Use of Specimens in the Class-Room*.—FRANK W. C. HERSEY, *Harvard*.—Any device which will enable the student to achieve this two-fold object ("command of correct and clear Eng., spoken and written"; "ability to read w. accuracy, intelligence, and appreciation") with economy of time and effort, recommends itself to the teacher of Eng. A most serviceable device is the use of a book of specimens, poetry as well as prose—a series of extracts illustrating various kinds of writing and problems in technique. The method is as interesting to smaller children as it is to the mature student. *Advantages*: (1) Method is inductive; it succeeds because it appeals to that zeal for discovery which makes youth pick machines apart, etc. (2) With printed specimens, the study becomes practical, intimate, and interesting; the analysis elicits frank opinions, for the texts enable students to follow every step of the discussion, to understand the bearing of every remark. . . (3) The student's interest does not evaporate in talk—in his themes he practices the principles he has acquired. (4) Not merely in the technique of compos. do the specimens interest—the student begins to grow attentive to literary excellences, to beauty of form and style. (5) Best of all, a good book of specimens leads students to read widely in the authors quoted. One boy sat up all night to read through his copy, he was so enchanted by the new voices singing in his ears. (Other examples,—some allured by subject matter, others by witchery of style.) (6) Rapidity and consequent vividness of instruction. Short specimens can be read and discussed in a proportionately short time; in a single sitting, even in 10 or 15 minutes, a student obtains a totality of impression, an understanding of lit. architecture, which cannot be obtained from an intermittent reading of the *Conciliation Speech* or of *Ivanhoe*, extending over

several days or weeks. In a few moments he grasps once and for all the principles of unity, coherence, and emphasis. Vivid, too, become words, when the student is "a minute and constant observer of their physiognomy" on the printed page. Grammar and idiom become vital when he realizes that they are a means not an end. (7) Various qualities of style, technical elements, problems of method, special kinds of writing, etc., may by means of specimens be isolated and studied separately. . . .

Just here the mutual illumination of compos. and lit. is brilliant indeed. As soon as the student, by studying lit. anatomy in miniature, comes to understand not only style, but structure, he has laid the finest foundations for appreciation of lit. At one and the same time he has acquired principles which will aid him in writing and standards of criticism which will aid him in reading.

3. *Debating Clubs*—W. S. HINCHMAN, *Groton School*—The problems of oral composition are essential, universal, because all of us spend vastly more time in speaking than in writing. (Statistics). . . Written compos. plays a very small part in developing a student's power of expression; oral compos., because of its greater use, is really the important thing. . . But how many of us demand in the speech of our students as elem. an observance of principles as we expect in themes from the lower grades? And because we do not insist on variety and exactness of vocab., our students get along in a kind of slurred, half-understood way on 500 words! There was a time when young men could compose on their feet, as it were, and when conversation was more than a beating of the air to explain that what you said was not exactly what you meant. What is more, logical, consecutive speech is retroactive; it breeds logical consecutive thought: there is a good chance that he who has learned to say what he means will come to mean what he says.

How shall good speech be bro't about? We can not greatly influence it in our generation; but we can demand co-operation of other teachers; can insist on good English, above all, on good pronunciation and careful choice of words in recitations. We can give time to practice in speaking, debating, and general discussion. See Prof. Foster's leaflet (No. 58, Feb. 1, 1908).

The chief advantages of a voluntary debating club, meeting out of school hours—in addition to formal class debating, rather than a substitute for it—are three: (1) It is interesting to the student—near to his ordinary conversation, far from class-routine, inspired by worthier motives than marks, conducted by himself,—he feels the indescribable gusto of being in open contest among his peers. (2) It provides a bridge betw. formal class-routine and the undisciplined discussions outside of school. (3) It takes up some of the nine hours when the student is neither studying nor sleeping, when he is talking and hearing talked language incredibly meaningless. (Statistics of debating in schools). Possible to have slightly formal-

ized discussions even among small children, on subjects more or less the same as those discussed by such children at the table or in their games. You cannot stop their discussing; shall you not then try to regulate it a little?

If these clubs are to be run by the students, teacher should play as small a part as possible. His chief part ought to be suggestion and stimulus; let him guard against pride of control, for that leads to command, thence to coercion, and coercion takes the delight out of the work. The power of refusal, the first of all revenues, has ever yielded a more copious stream of eager well-expressed argument than could be squeezed from the dry husks of oppressed students.

Best results seem to come from two clubs, senior and junior, to which nearly all of the members of the school belong, and which compete at frequent intervals. The proposition should be interesting and cover familiar ground. Sometimes, as frequently in real life, the class or club may have somewhat formal discussions, rather than actual debates, on significant topics with many points of view.

. . . One of the most valuable is what is called general debate: a familiar subject is chosen, but concealed until the two camps are met for debate; the result may frequently seem chaotic, but it is wholesome, not because of the chaos, but because of the naturalness, because it comes very near to the kind of oral composition which will be demanded from the students in all walks of life. . .

It is the duty of the Debating Club not to dissociate formal argument wholly from spontaneous, every-day discussion, but merely to set a higher, more exacting standard of expression; to train boys in careful, consecutive thought; to promote the ordering of ideas, the subordination of parts, the elimination of irrelevant topics—in short, to promote apposite speech.

The Educational Theatre and Our Children—PROF. G. P. BAKER, *Harvard*—The success of the experiment in N. Y., not only in raising the standard of the drama and of acting so as to draw thousands from vulgar melodrama, vaudeville, and moving pictures, but also in providing means of self-cultivation in the drama for hundreds that take part, to the marked improvement of their speech, deportment, taste, and morals,—has much in it for our consideration. The indifference of parents to the demoralization of inartistic shows is scandalous. What concentration is possible when several things are going on at once? Restless pupils are bored by having to use their minds; they have no power of visualization; can not read; the drama is an uncomfortable form of fiction which seen on the stage *might* be interesting. But when young children are trained, not to imitate a teacher's idea, but to *work out a performance for themselves*, they soon see that a play is essentially dif. from a novel or a poem; that it tells a story behind the foot-lights; also that unless each does his part, the definite purpose of the dramatist will not be bro't out. Thus, in trying to realize what the action means, they get glimpses of human conduct outside themselves, they gain in poise and grasp, the imagination is emancipated and steadied with fine tho'ts, just at a time when most needed. We can risk a little when a boy is filled with ideas about characters. One play a year carefully done reaches out a long way. Experience shows that this elementary dramatic training renders the desirable attractive and the undesirable unattractive.—DISCUSSION, shifting but lively.

N. B. Please correct ADDRESS and POSITION for list of Members.